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UNCLAS SANAA 001314

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA, NEA/ARPI, NEA/P, NEA/PA NEA/PD, SA/PPD  
NEA/P FOR GSULLIVAN AND RSHORE  
NEA/PD FOR CWHITTLESEY  
NEA/ARPI FOR TROBERTS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OIIP PREL KISL YM

SUBJECT: OUTREACH FOLLOWING NEWSWEEK'S RETRACTION OF ITS  
STORY ALLEGING KORAN DESECRATION AT GUANTANAMO

REFS: A. STATE 88240

1B. SANAA 1305

1C. STATE 90992

¶1. SUMMARY: Post has used both bilateral discussions and public diplomacy to counter the now retracted Newsweek article alleging the desecration of the Koran at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Bilateral efforts have included a meeting between the Ambassador and President Saleh, as well as with the Ministers of the Interior and Human Rights. Public Diplomacy efforts include distributing a post-generated op-ed for placement in all major media outlets. END SUMMARY

¶2. On May 14, Ambassador met with President Saleh and noted that the USG considers the recent allegations that Guantanamo interrogators may have desecrated the Holy Koran to be an extremely serious matter. Ambassador noted Secretary Rice's and SecDef's official repudiation of the

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alleged behavior and that the U.S. Military would conduct an immediate and complete investigation. He assured the President that such an act would be abhorrent, repugnant, and contrary to the fundamental belief in freedom and respect for all religious groups upon which our nation was founded. The meeting and statement were reported extensively in the local press (ref B.)

¶3. On May 15, the same points were reiterated to the Minister of Human Rights Amat al-Alim Soswa and Minister of Interior Rashad Mohammad al-Alimi in separate meetings.

¶4. On May 17, PD drafted a statement from the Embassy for distribution to all major local media outlets. The statement praised Yemeni restraint and fairly balanced reporting during and after the release of the Newsweek report. It also noted that Newsweek had retracted the story, that to date nothing has been found to substantiate the allegation, that the U.S. government will investigate all credible allegations of misconduct, and that the U.S. condemns all acts of violent protest. It also expressed U.S. sympathies to those injured and to the families of those killed in the protests in Afghanistan.

KRAJESKI